

Foster Parent Survival Guide

**by Leading Foster Care Expert
Dr. John DeGarmo**



TABLE OF CONTENTS:

Why Foster?.....	5
Rules and Expectations.....	7
Finding Success in School.....	11
Getting Help.....	14
Time for Some Faith.....	17
Your Marriage.....	20
Saying Goodbye.....	23
Conclusion.....	26



“ I am a much better person for each child that has come through my home and been a part of my family.”

Over the years, I have had the wonderful pleasure and opportunity to be a foster parent to over 50 children. Without a doubt, my life has been made so very rich by each child that has come to live with me. I am a much stronger parent, much stronger husband and partner, and much stronger member of society for each child that has come to live with me. Make no mistake, there have been those times when it has been a little challenging. Yet, it is also the most rewarding thing I have ever done. I hope it either has been or will be for you, as well, my friend.



The Foster Parent Survival Guide

The Foster Parent Survival Guide is a little introduction into what you might need to survive as a foster parent. This pamphlet was designed with you in mind, as you care for children in need. As a foster parent, myself, I want to thank YOU for what YOU do. It is not easy, and at times, you might just want to “pack up the bags, and move on.” Yet, make no mistake. You ARE changing lives! You ARE making a difference! You ARE an example of love, not only for the children, but for all who are watching what YOU do, each day. Thank you for reading this special pamphlet. It is my hope that you find it useful.

-Dr. John DeGarmo



CHAPTER 1:

Why Foster?



On any give day, there are roughly 450,000 children in the United States alone who are in the foster care system. So many children who need a home. So many children who need someone to care for them. So many children who need someone like you to make a choice to care for them; to make a choice to help them. To be sure, foster parenting is a choice, a voluntary act, if you will. Foster parents volunteer as an act of service to a child welfare agency or government organization.





Sometimes, these children might keep us awake at night; sometimes they might challenge us; sometimes they might resist our attempts to care for us; sometimes they might even fight us. It can be a daunting and difficult task, at times. Goodness knows it has been for me, on several occasions. Nevertheless, these children need us to care for them.

Rescue the weak and the needy, and deliver them from the hand of the wicked. Do these words ring true to you? Do these words speak about foster children? They certainly do to me. Children in foster care are weak. Children in foster care are needy. Most importantly, children in foster care need to be rescued. This is what foster parents do; we rescue them by providing a safe and stable home for them. We clothe and feed them. We provide clean beds and a safe environment for them. But, perhaps most importantly, we are to love them. There is no better calling in life than that; to provide love.

For more foster care information and resources, visit:
<http://drjohndegarmofostercare.weebly.com/>

Chapter 2:

Rules and Expectations



All families have some sort of routine and patterns of behavior that exist within their home. Your own family may have a routine that you follow on a daily or regular basis. Depending upon the type of household your foster child came from, he may not be familiar with your day to day routine. Indeed, he may come from a home that had no set routine or schedule. Even more, he may have lived in a home where there were no expectations of him, and no rules for him to follow.

The Foster Parent Survival Guide

There is a good chance that any rules and expectations you have for your foster child will not be met. It may take awhile, but as a foster parent, you are in it for the long, tough haul. Make no mistake, it is often times tough. You just might be the first adults in their lives who will not give up on them. They may resist you, and may resist all that you have to offer. This is normal for a foster child. Remember, they may very well not want to be in your home, as it is not their own home. They may not want to be living with your family when they come to you, as it is not their own family, and you can't expect them to embrace you and your family immediately, or even to like you.



With this in mind, it is important to set up some rules and expectations, though, early on with your foster child. As expectations and rules may make or break your foster child, you need to be realistic with your expectations from the child. When establishing rules in your household with your foster child, it is important that you continue to stick to the rules you already have established.

The Foster Parent Survival Guide

It is important that you include your foster child into your family, and into your routine. Before expecting too much from him, give him some time alone to become comfortable with his new home, family, and surroundings. Allow him time to observe your family's routine before expecting him to actively participate. Some of your routines might be informal, such as dinner time habits, cleaning his room, respect for others when speaking, etc. If he has questions about your family's routine, answer them honestly, and at a level he can understand. Let him know why you do such activities in your house.



For foster care news, information, resources, videos, and much more, visit Dr. DeGarmo's [website](http://drjohndegarmofostercare.weebly.com/).
<http://drjohndegarmofostercare.weebly.com/>

The Foster Parent Survival Guide

You probably do not accept violent behavior, disrespectful attitudes, profanity, or destruction of property within your home. Yet, many foster children have not been brought up in this manner, and you may find that your foster child does not understand your values and morals. One of your biggest challenges as a foster parent will be to remain patient with your foster child's progress as you teach him the kind of behavior you expect from him in your home, and not insist upon it all at once. If you do demand the type of behavior that you expect from your own family, you may push your foster child even further away. Work on the behaviors first that you find most important. When your foster child has improved with one expectation, then it is time to begin focusing on another. All children enjoy praise from the adults in their lives. Sadly, your foster child may never have received praise before, nor had the opportunity to be successful in a given task. You might be the first to offer your child words of praise and encouragement!



Chapter 3:

Finding Success in School



School. For so many children, it is a place of learning, of laughter, and a place to make friends and form relationships. Not so for children in foster care. It is a very difficult place, where academic failure and behavior problems are the norm. For your child from foster care to truly have a chance to succeed, you as a foster parent must lead the charge and blaze a path as an advocate, fighting for your child's every chance. Most likely, you will be the only one fighting for your child, as the caseworker and teacher are overwhelmed with all they have to do. Therefore, it is up to you. You need to become as involved as possible. The more active foster parents are in school and activities, the more likely children will succeed. Here are just a few things you can do to help your child from foster care succeed in school.

The Foster Parent Survival Guide

Reach out to school employees and form a positive working relationship with them. Let school counselors, teachers and administrators know that they can always call or email you if needed. Also obtain contact information from your child's teachers. Attempt to remain in regular contact with them. Use all forms and means of communication. Through text messages, email, cell phones, Facebook, Twitter, and other social media platforms, there are numerous ways to reach out to teachers and school employees. It is essential that you remain up to date with your child's progress, both with academics and behavior.

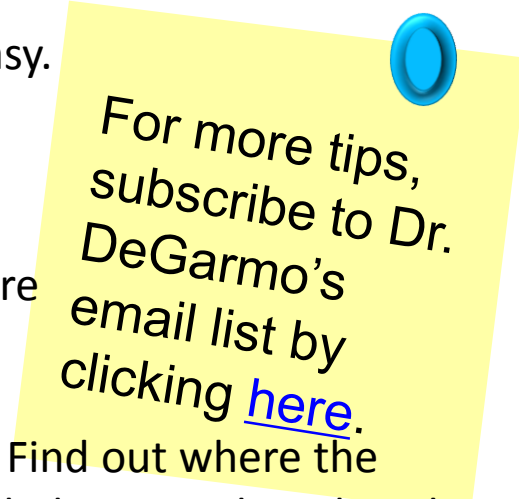
Not only should you as a foster parent request regular behavior updates from the child's school, but a responsible foster parent will provide such information to the school as well. If your foster child is having a particularly difficult time at home, let the teachers and counselors know, allowing these educators to be prepared and equipped to handle any difficulties that might come their way.

**For much more, pick up a copy
of *Helping Foster Children
in School!***



The Foster Parent Survival Guide

School work will likely not come easy. Foster children, in general, tend to perform below level in regard to both academic performance and positive behavior. And most children in foster care are behind in math and reading skills. It is important that you and the child's teachers set realistic goals for the child. Find out where the child's learning ability and level of knowledge is, and work with him at this level. Talk to your child's teachers about his/her abilities and if any accommodations need to be made. You should encourage your child to set goals and expectations, and celebrate every success, no matter how big or small they may be.



For more tips, subscribe to Dr. DeGarmo's email list by clicking [here](#).

-

You can help your foster student in his development by encouraging your child to participate in activities outside of the classroom. Many schools have extracurricular organizations and activities with various school sports, music, and clubs. Along with this, community sports and organizations also allow kids the opportunity to not only participate and develop these skills, but to learn new skills, develop talents and to exercise.

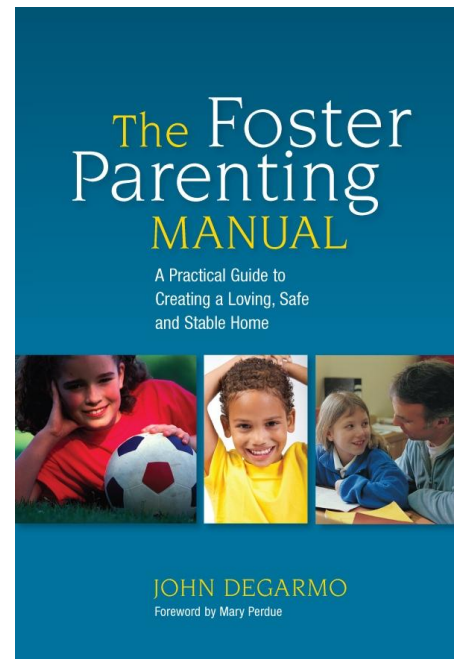
School is the last place your foster child wants to be at. He wants to go back to his home, his family, and is simply trying to survive each day. Foster children often have a difficult time exhibiting proper school behavior during the school day. For many, school is a constant reminder that they are, indeed, foster children without a true home.

Chapter 4:

Getting Help

When foster parenting becomes too stressful, you, your family, and your foster child will all feel the effects. Thus, one of the most important reminders for you, as a foster parent, is the fact that you need to take care of yourself, physically, mentally, and emotionally. If you neglect yourself, your family will suffer as a result. By taking the following stress reducing steps, you will help to ensure your well being, as you care for others in your home. The next page offers just a brief look at how you can best find help.

For much, much more, pick up a copy of *The Foster Parenting Manual*!



Foster Parenting Survival Guide

Time for You

First and foremost, you need to make time for yourself. As a foster parent, this will be difficult, as you will be required to take care of a child full time. Do not neglect your own personal health; make sure you get plenty of exercise regularly and eat healthy.

Your marriage

Sadly, many marriages suffer during the foster process. Make sure that you and your spouse are on the same page with your parenting, and ensure that the two of you are consistent when it comes to all decision making with your foster child. Finally, do not neglect the needs and concerns of your spouse. Instead, make your marriage the cornerstone of your home, and work to make it a productive and happy one.

Your children

If you have children of your own, you may find that you are not giving them the attention and love they need. Instead, your attention is many times on the needs and behavior of your foster child. As a result, your relationship with your biological children will suffer. Make sure you spend one on one time with each of your own children

Foster Parenting Survival Guide

Foster Parent Support Groups

There are a number of foster parent support groups and associations across the nation. A few of these organizations may be national ones, while many others are, comprised of foster parent, like you. Either way, you will benefit by being in a support organization, as they will provide you with not only support, but information, fellowship, and important insight that will help you be a better foster parent.

Churches

Many churches across the nation have opened their doors to foster parents in an attempt to help them as they care for children. Indeed, many local foster parent associations meet in local churches each month. There are those churches who have trained some of their members in order to supervise visitations between foster child and biological family members, with the meetings held within the church, itself

The **ULTIMATE**
children's book for kids
in foster care. A
Different Home: A New
Foster Child's Story.
Get it [HERE](#).

JOHN DEGARMO AND KELLY DEGARMO
ILLUSTRATED BY NORMA JEAN TRAMMELL

A DIFFERENT HOME

A NEW FOSTER CHILD'S STORY

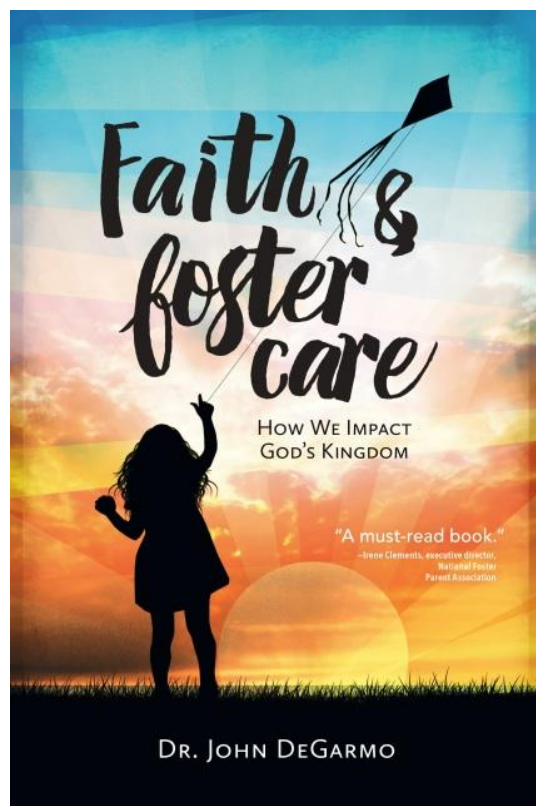


Chapter 5:

Time for Some Faith

Prayer. For me, it is an important part of my parenting. There are a number of ways we can pray for our foster children. We need to become prayer warriors for our foster children, lifting them up in prayer on a daily basis. Not only should we pray for the children, but our foster children's case workers also need prayer. After all, their job is a difficult one, and they have emotional ties to the children, as well. Just today, as I write this, I spoke with a case worker who told me she worked with a child for over two years, who was placed back into a birth parent's home, despite the case worker's pleas. With tears forming in her eyes, this case worker told me of the concerns she had about the child's reunification with the parents came true, and that she continues to pray for the child each day.

For much, much more, pick up a copy of *Faith and Foster Care*!



The Foster Parent Survival Guide



Along with this, the birth parents of the children are also in need of prayer. Indeed, despite the abuse, neglect, and other challenges and horrors the biological parents and birth family members may have placed upon these children, they are children of God, just as you and I are. This might be difficult, though. Are we praying for the well being and healing of the birth parent, or for the family to spend more time in jail? Are we praying that the children be reunified with their biological family, or that the parent's rights to the child are terminated so we can adopt the child?

To be sure, you just may be the only one praying for these parents, and we need to put aside our personal judgment and beliefs and instead pray that God's healing hand and will be done, for all involved. As Christians, we are called to pray for mercy and justice, for not just the children, but for their parents, too. These parents may be victims of abuse, neglect, rape, and violence, also. On the next page, you will find just a few verses from Scripture that you might find helpful.

The Foster Parent Survival Guide

“He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you?

To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly[a] with your God.”

- Micah 6:8

For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in. I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.

-Matthew 25:35-36,

To look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

-James 1:27

Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.

-Psalm 82:3,4



Chapter 6:

Your Marriage and Foster Parenting



Sadly, many marriages and relationships suffer during the foster process. When you are putting much of your energies and time into your foster child, you may be so drained and exhausted that you soon neglect your spouse. Further complication this, some foster children are skilled at pitting one parent against the other, bringing some heated and very unproductive arguments to your home.

The Foster Parent Survival Guide

Make sure that you and your partner are on the same page with your parenting, and ensure that the two of you are consistent when it comes to all decision making with your foster child. Finally, do not neglect the needs and concerns of your partner. Instead, make your marriage the cornerstone of your home, and work to make it a productive and happy one.

If we do not take care of ourselves, you and I as foster parents, we may very well become filled with anxiety, grow weary, and face burnout. To be sure, I have experienced those feelings, at times, as well. You probably have, also. So many foster parents do



For more, email
drjohndegarmo@gmail.com to
sign up for Dr.
DeGarmo's
Foster Care Blog

The Foster Parent Survival Guide

Just recently, when went through a one year stretch of 9 children in my own home. Yes, 9! I grappled with my own burn out. Yet, when I took some steps to help my marriage, they helped to alleviate much of the stress and anxieties that were on the verge of overwhelming me. When we do take time for ourselves, for our marriage, and our own children, we not only help ourselves and our family, we also help the foster children living in our homes. May you all take time for yourselves, and may you all continue to care for children in need. Find ways to make your marriage stronger; find ways to support your spouse as you care for children in need.



Find more Foster Care info on the Foster Care Resource Facebook page.



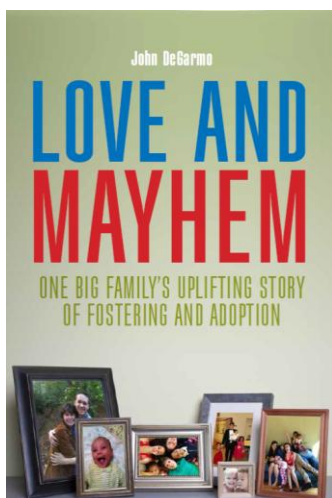
Chapter Seven: Saying Goodbye



Perhaps one of the most difficult aspects of being a foster parent is the moment when your foster child leaves your home. So many times for me, the removal of the child from my home has come with little warning, and with great emotion. As a foster parent, your home becomes a place where foster children come for a period of time, with the goal of being reunited with their family in the near future.

The Foster Parent Survival Guide

Whenever you are told, there will sure to be emotions involved, for both you and the foster child. The removal of a child may be a joyous event or one that is filled with grief. If the removal of your foster child is one that you disapprove of, due to his new placement, it is important that you do not share these feelings with your foster child. If you must express your concerns and feelings with the caseworker, do so in private, as it will only serve to burden him with more anxiety during this difficult time of separation. How your foster child is told that he is leaving can be a difficult conversation for you to have, and for him to listen to. It can be a time of great anxiety for him, therefore you need to prepare beforehand.



Find out how Dr. John experienced feelings of grief and loss when foster children leave his home in the book [Love and Mayhem](#). Click [HERE](#) for more.

The Foster Parent Survival Guide

If you have time, you and the child's caseworker need to decide how best to inform the child. If the foster child has a special relationship with the caseworker, it might be best if the caseworker lets him know. Again, you may not have time for this, if the child is being moved in a 24 hour time frame. Maybe you or your spouse would be better suited to tell the child, due to the relationship built between the child and the parent.



When any foster child leaves your home, no matter the level of attachment, there will be emotions when it is time to say goodbye, for both you and the child. Rest assured, many foster parents do feel grief during the removal of their foster child, as the child has come to be an important and loved member of their family. After all, the removal of a foster child from a foster home is akin to a loss, and any loss can cause grieving.

Conclusion

I hope this has been of help to you. Now, we both know that this little epamphlet just barely covers the surface of what it takes to be a foster parent. Indeed, I have written several books on the topic, and I could write several more. I am still learning every day!

Here's what I want you to do next:

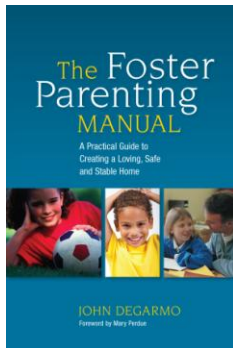
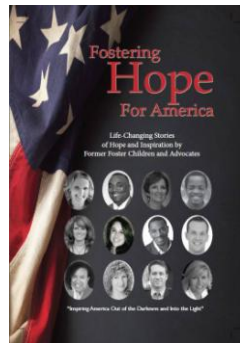
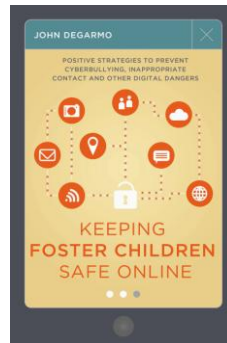
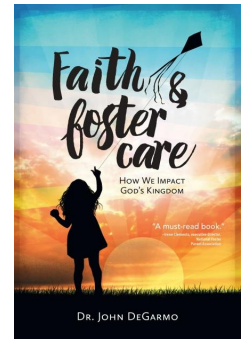
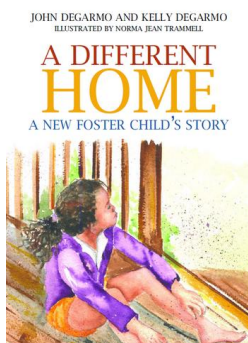
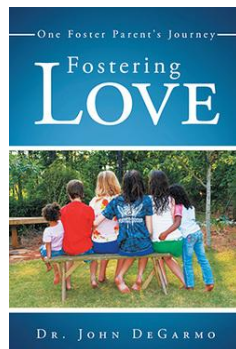
1. Send me an email at drjohndegarmo@gmail.com and let me know what you thought of the ebook. Also, email me if you want to be added to my foster care mailing list.
2. Say hello to me on [Twitter](#) or [Facebook](#) at Dr. John DeGarmo. I like to put a face to a name.
3. Share this epamphlet with your friends and with those you know who will benefit from it.
4. Oh, and check out [The Foster Care Institute](#) for so much more. So much more!!!

Again, thanks for what YOU do! -Dr. John



The Foster Parent Survival Guide

More Foster Care books by Dr. John DeGarmo



For much more in Foster Care information, visit The **Foster Care Institute.**

<http://drjohndegarmofostercare.weebly.com/>